



August 12, 2010

## **California Highway Patrol to crack down on cell phone use**

**By Catherin Bowen / The Reporter**  
cbowen@thereporter.com

The California Highway Patrol has sworn to crack down on motorists who use their cell phones and other electronics without hands-free devices while driving.

CHP's Golden Gate Division will be once again joining local law enforcement agencies in enforcing a "zero tolerance" campaign Wednesday, targeting drivers not utilizing hands-free options while also educating them about the consequences of distracted driving, according to a CHP press release.

During a similar effort last year, CHP offices throughout the Bay Area issued more than 550 citations in a two-day period, authorities said. According to a report, one cell phone stop in Solano County led to the arrest of the driver for being under the influence.

An additional 700-plus citations were issued by law enforcement agencies in Santa Clara County. This year the first phase of the campaign, which took place this past Wednesday resulted in the Bay Area CHP issuing 350 citations and more than 440 in Santa Clara County. Several motorists were also arrested after they were found to be driving without a valid driver's license.

Because of the increase in the number of traffic collisions caused by drivers illegally using cell phones, the CHP will be out battling this issue that they are referring to as a "menace to the safety of the motoring public."

In 2008, more than 30,000 people were involved in traffic collisions in California in which inattention played a role, according to the Statewide Integrated Traffic Records System report. The report said that more than 1,000 of those drivers were using cell phones, which have been identified as the number one cause of driver distraction in collision reports.

The Highway Traffic Safety Administration and Virginia Tech Transportation Institute have identified distracted driving as "anything that diverts the driver's attention away from the primary task of navigating a vehicle and responding to critical events." In addition to cell phone use, this can include applying makeup, using a GPS, eating, drinking, changing music and a variety of other activities while driving.

According to the CHP, "Distracted driving is a serious, life-threatening practice and we will not rest until we stop it."

The three points that law enforcement is hoping drivers will come away with is that "no phone call is worth a human life," to "pay attention or pay the price" and not to let "distractions take away from your reaction."